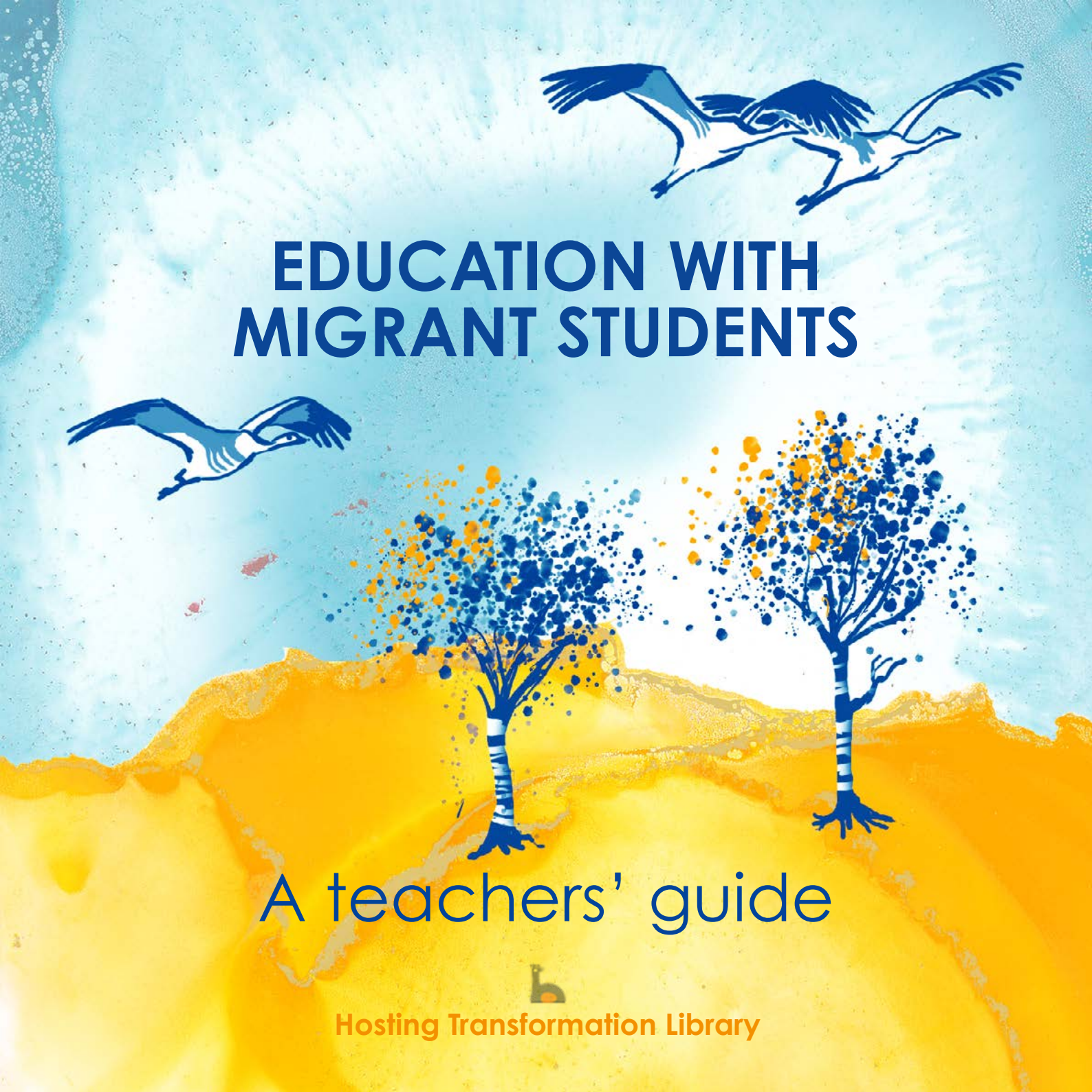


EDUCATION WITH MIGRANT STUDENTS

A teachers' guide

Hosting Transformation Library

Education with Migrant Students
- A teachers' guide
Support for Teachers of Students
with Experience of Migration

"In all my years as a teacher with migrant students, no-one has offered me this kind of support before."
WW– a teacher in Sweden

A new situation arose in Europe following the Russian invasion of Ukraine: a huge movement of European students, nationally and internationally. Even teachers with experience with migrant students confronted new challenges. We brought together teachers from Ukraine, Poland and Sweden to explore both the challenges and the opportunities. This guidebook reflects their experience.

Authors: Anna Błaszczak, Charlotte Karlsson, Lyudmyla Gouryeyeva, Galina Gupan, Marilyn Mehlmann, Galina Sierova
with contributions from many teachers
Coordinating editor: Marilyn Mehlmann
Graphics and layout: Boris Goldammer

With the support of

Funded by Swedish Institute

CONTENTS

STARTING POINTS

The STSEM project

The project Support for Teachers of Students with Experience of Migration – STSEM – focused initially on how migrant Ukrainian pupils were faring in exodus, principally in Poland and Sweden. Then, as the war in Ukraine continued, it added the dimension of internal migration: how pupils displacing to less threatened parts of Ukraine were handled; and subsequently took note of the challenges of re-integration when conditions permit a return.

The departure point was a vision of opportunities: that migrant students
…could not only be integrated into their new communities, but could come to be regarded as an asset
…could not only accept migrant status, but could come to see it as a valuable experience.

What happened

The project enabled an exchange of experience between teachers in Ukraine, Poland and Sweden which proved both fruitful and moving: the teachers were deeply touched by the commitment of their peers to the welfare of the Ukrainian migrant students.

Through this exchange and not least through documented detailed case studies, many guidelines and proposals for activities emerged that will hopefully benefit other teachers of migrant students.

Origins

The origin of the project was another project called *Make Education, Not War* – MENW – that started already in April 2022, only two months after the invasion of Ukraine, with the ambition to support Ukrainian teachers whose pupils were becoming increasingly dispersed. And MENW in turn built upon a nation-wide network of Ukrainian teachers formerly deeply engaged in *Education for Sustainable Development in Action* – ESDA. The network was there, the need was obvious, funds were quickly raised through crowd-funding.

Here to stay?

One of the first insights to emerge from STSEM was that Ukrainian migrant pupils are different from most other migrant pupils: they expect to return to Ukraine, *soon.* They and their parents are thus less motivated for them to engage with the school system in the host country than most other migrant groups.

Another effect of the perceived transitory nature of the influx of pupils was the decision by Ukrainian education authorities, supported by their colleagues

e.g. in Poland, to make online schooling from the Ukraine an available option for pupils. From their side, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science launched initiatives like the 'All-Ukrainian Online School' to provide distance learning options for students whose studies were disrupted by the war. In Poland, a special ruling was made exempting Ukrainian pupils from the compulsory schooling regulation.

However, as the war continued, attitudes began to change. In mid 2024 the Polish authorities rescinded the previous ruling, thus opening a need for 50-60,000 new school places for the displaced pupils who live in Poland but had not previously used their right to schooling.

In the same period, June 2024, the Ukrainian education authorities introduced new rules, including that remote classes should have at least 20 students.

Simultaneously, a new perspective on the topic of migrant pupils emerged as Poland began documenting the experience of teachers with Polish pupils who returned to the country after long periods abroad. Some of this experience is reflected in the case studies, and in the section 'This river can flow both ways'.

Rules, regulations, policy

A policy briefon education policy by UNHCR (2023), "Education on Hold", noted that more than two million Ukrainian children were refugees in Europe; only about half of them were enrolled in schools in the respective host country during the school year 2022–2023. There are several reasons given for this. For instance, that the refugee situation is looked upon as temporary, language barriers, lack of information about education options, uncertainty of procedure concerning returning to the Ukrainian educational system, differences in the host countries when it comes to admitting students in the educational system, difficulties in the assessment of the educational needs and planning for school infrastructure.

The European Commission (2022a) stresses that migrant children who enjoy temporary protection have the same right to education as nationals. To achieve educational integration, learning needs (e.g. language), social needs (sense of belonging) and emotional needs (safety and coping with separation and trauma) are supposed to be addressed by the policies and practices of the educational system.

However, initial desk research indicated that support systems for host teachers and schools varied widely across the EU. In brief, in 2023 the most common practical support to teachers mentioned by EU countries (if any) was help in 'translating' Ukrainian school grades into local equivalents, to be able to assess where to place the pupils.

Compulsory schooling

School attendance, and the provision of schooling,

are obligatory in all European countries. In some countries, like Poland, an exception was initially made for the new inflow of Ukrainian students; not only because of the sheer size of the challenge but also because it was widely believed that the presence of these students was 'temporary'. As the hostilities continued most countries began to 'normalise' the situation of Ukrainian migrant students. Nonetheless, as of January 2025, as many as 335,000 Ukrainian migrant students in EU countries (about half of all school-age migrants) continue to study in Ukrainian schools online, many of them simultaneously enrolled in local schools where they are living.

Institutional support

Additional support has also, in several countries and from several different sources, been made available to schools: Adjustments were also made to the curriculum to incorporate resilience-building, cultural preservation, and mental health education for both teachers and students.

The situation in Sweden

Swedish national policy is still (January 2025) that Ukrainian students fleeing the current invasion are exempt from obligatory schooling, though they are entitled to enrol in a Swedish school at the discretion of the parents. Public schools have an obligation to accept their enrolment and to provide adequate support.

In comparison with Poland the numbers of such students arriving in Sweden are low; whereas the total number of migrant students from all countries is high – probably at least 12 % of the school population, though unevenly distributed throughout the country. An early poll by the national school administration, Skolverket, showed that two out of three municipalities had capacity to receive more migrant students from Ukraine.

In addition to long and broad experience of integrating migrant students, Sweden has the advantage of a system called 'mother-tongue tuition' whereby students are entitled to weekly lessons in their mother tongue conducted by a native-language teacher. There were thus Ukrainian-speaking teachers already working within the Swedish school system.

Despite these considerable advantages, some difficulties have been experienced in integrating the incoming students into Swedish society, not least because of the shared perception that they may not be staying for long.

The situation in Poland

Poland has taken in a very large number of Ukrainian students. According to data from the Polish Ministry of National Education, in October 2024 the total number of Ukrainian students in the Polish education system was 248,000, with 179,700 being students who arrived after the invasion in February 2022, and 68,300 being students who were already in Poland before then.

According to an agreement between the Ukrainian and Polish ministries of education, from September 2024 Ukrainian students arriving in Poland are subject to compulsory education. Exception is made

for students who, in the 2024/2025 school year, are attending the highest grade level in a school operating within the Ukrainian education system, who may continue their education online.

By the end of 2024 Ukrainian students constituted the majority of migrant students in Polish schools (71% of the migrant student population) and around 3% of the total student population in Poland.

Polish schools have an increasing number of specialist teachers. In May 2022 an obligation to employ a specific number of specialist teachers was introduced via an addendum to the Teacher's Charter of 1982, which establishes precise rules regarding the employment of pedagogues, special education teachers, psychologists, speech therapists, and educational therapists. In the 2024/2025 school year, the addendum is fully implemented for the first time. This means an increase in the number of hours for pedagogues, special education teachers, psychologists, speech therapists, or educational therapists.

One STSEM teacher reports:
A Special Educational Needs Team sets up an Individual Needs Card for incoming migrant pupils. In addition to personal data, the Card contains information on psychological and pedagogical status, including the extent to which the child requires psychological and pedagogical support, and how such support is provided. It also includes an assessment of the effectiveness of the support and conclusions for further work.
The Support Action Plan is based on an assessment of individual needs. It includes: difficulties and needs of the pupil; opportunities for development; support objectives; activities carried out; working methods. It is signed by the specialist and the caregiver, and updated during the school year depending on outcomes.

The situation in Ukraine

During the Covid19 pandemic the Ukrainian school system had developed ways to function online, and this experience has benefited the initial wave of migration due to the current invasion: teachers were encouraged to deliver online lessons including migrated students, students were encouraged to stay with their pre-invasion classes.

By mid 2024 the situation had changed. The government announced a new School Offline policy. Among other things, it stipulates that
Full-time offline or blended learning should become the main form of education
Internally displaced children should study at the place of actual residence
Institutions that do not meet the requirements are to be closed.

Internal displacement has also assumed significant proportions. According to the Ministry of Social Policy, 4.9 million internally displaced persons were registered in Ukraine in spring 2024. Of these, almost 21% (997,000) are under the age of 18.

Programs and materials offered to teachers

The STSEM plan included a questionnaire to be distributed to teachers in the partner countries as well as some other countries, for purposes of comparison. One objective was to detect discrepancies between ambitions for support for teachers embedded in national policies and regulations, and the actual support experienced by teachers.

This proved to be beyond the capacity of the project: very few teachers responded to the survey – not least because they are all fully engaged in, and sometimes overwhelmed by, the challenges of working with the migrant students. Some teachers were interviewed by project staff, to complement the questionnaires. In contrast, there was a strong response to an invitation to write rather detailed case studies documenting teachers' experience and experiments in working with migrant students: a rich variety of case studies were submitted by 20 teachers, and they form the basis for much of this guide.

With the caveat that these findings are more anecdotal than statistical, we found some commonalities, including

- The pivotal role played by specialists in supporting teachers in Poland
- No mention of any courses offered to subject teachers
- Few mentions of difficulties in assigning pupils to appropriate grades
- Insufficient attention to the competences needed for trauma-informed education
- Frequent mention of poor 'early response' to learning difficulties

You, the teacher

Throughout the project we have been struck by the high ambitions, dedication, and creativity of teachers hosting migrant Ukrainian pupils. We have also been struck by the need to support those teachers through what is often not only stressful, with new demands added to an already often over-full work day; but also a potentially traumatic experience. There is a need both to offer a 'trauma-informed' pedagogy to help teachers cope with the emotional challenges of their pupils related to both war-trauma and adjustment difficulties, *and* to offer psychological support to the teachers themselves.

If you are such a teacher: please don't forget to take care of yourself. We hope that this book will offer you some support. In the section *Support that Makes a Difference* we outline some of the strategies that were found effective by Ukrainian teachers.

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In many different ways, the authors of the case studies depict the need to create a learning environment that supports individual emotional regulation and cross-boundary non-judgmental communication, as well as enabling an awareness and questioning of generally accepted wisdom.

Acknowledging the validity of diverse experiences

At its most basic level, a learning environment can be categorised by the degree of its support for learning from experience: "*Kind environments* provide sufficient feedback on [a student's] actions that the diligent [student] has the opportunity to improve future performance. *Wicked environments,* by contrast… provide feedback [that is] delayed, ambiguous, vague, incomplete, distorted, or deliberately misleading". (Simandan, 2011).

In this context, distorted feedback may unintentionally arise from within: from prevailing stereotypes that deny the validity of the migrant student's experience. Hence the importance of actively challenging stereotypes (see below, Challenging stereotypes).

Experience-based pedagogies

Given the complexity of the situation in working with migrant students, an appropriate pedagogical response is not limited to high-quality feedback. The principles of enabling transformative learning also have much to offer – as well as the 'pedagogies of collapse'.

Both the above, as well as Paulo Freire's work and many other 'unconventional' pedagogies, have a base in experiential learning, often including or implying the admission of emotions into the classroom. This is at the heart of a 'trauma-informed pedagogy' (below). The simple act of listening attentively and non-judgmentally to the emotional and other experiences of students can improve and enrich a traditional learning environment.

Enabling transformative learning

A large body of research and praxis is emerging around the concept and methods of transformative learning (Biester & Mehlmann, 2020).

One key concept of relevance to working with migrant students is that of 'edge emotions' (Mälkki, 2019): the idea that exposure to a potentially traumatic experience gives rise to strong emotions, ranging from anxiety, fear and anger to a passion for understanding.

An undesired effect of unacknowledged emotions can be PTSD, or Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome. However, when the emotions are acknowledged they can in the best case lead to a positive outcome, sometimes called PTG, or Post-Traumatic Growth. See further in the sections on Trauma-Informed Pedagogy and Trauma-Informed Education.

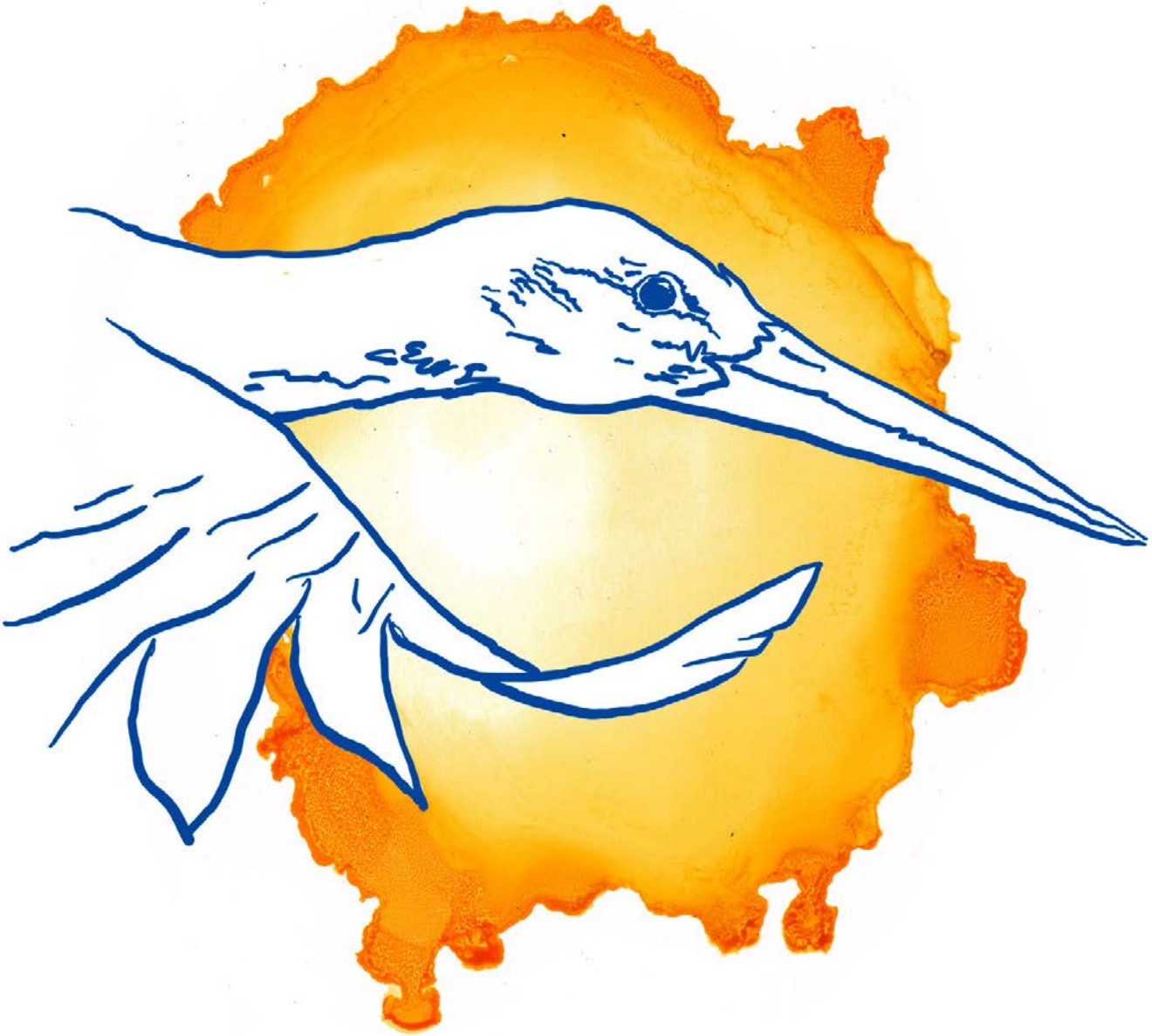
Pedagogies of collapse

We live in an era of multiple local and global crises, of which war is only one. Climate change and attendant exceptional localised events such as flooding, fires, droughts are increasing; as well as global phenomena like biodiversity collapse, pandemics, resource shortages, and more.

> *After decades of progress and prosperity, the world has hit the limits to growth predicted by the Meadows report of 1972. How do we talk to and teach young people about collapse without triggering defence mechanisms of denial and depression?*
> *– Ginie Servant-Miklos, 2024*

In other words: potentially traumatic experiences are delivered to our pupils every day via internet and social media. The need for a trauma-informed pedagogy is by no means limited to migrant pupils.

TRAUMA-INFORMED EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY



The expression 'trauma-informed education', or TIE, is increasingly associated with a whole-school approach. While such an approach is clearly desirable, it may not be an option for many teachers of migrant students. We therefore focus primarily on a *trauma-informed pedagogy*: what an individual teacher can do when confronted with potentially traumatised pupils.

The nature of trauma

A traumatic experience is one that provokes shock, fear and other immediately troublesome emotions. The experience is not always direct: it can be anticipatory, expressed as fear of future developments, or witnessed (for instance, witnessing a disaster, a physical or sexual assault, abuse, an accident). The impact on the individual or a group can't be assessed from 'outside': what may seem trivial to some will be hugely debilitating for others, and vice versa.

It's safe to say that everyone at some time has a traumatic experience. Clearly the incidence will be higher in people exposed to, say, acts of war; but while each experience is unique, the exposure is universal – and rapidly becoming more so, with daily witnessing via social media of disasters and crises worldwide.

Depending on the inner strength and external support available to each person, such experiences can have either negative or positive long-term effects. Negative effects can include PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), a clinical diagnosis of an incapacitating condition. There are many shades between PTSD and 'normal' anxiety. For instance it's normal to grieve over a loss; but for some people the grief becomes pathological, either temporarily or permanently.

At the other end of the scale are less well-known positive effects, stretching as far as PTG: Post-Traumatic Growth. Indeed, some kind of potentially traumatic experience is often proposed as a prerequisite for major personal growth.

For more about Trauma-Informed Education, TIE, see below in the chapter End notes.

Pupils' psychological resilience and wellbeing

Resilience can be described as the ability to adapt and recover from adversity. Children, and adults, can acquire skills that contribute to their wellbeing in the face of troublesome experiences. Some such factors that can be taught or supported in an educational situation have been identified as

- 'Reframe' experience
- Seek support from friends, family, or others
- Move on from any feelings of shame or self-blame connected with a traumatic event
- Have a coping strategy for dealing with past and future experiences
- Pacing: enabled to proceed at one's own pace, without pressure

The list above indicates that for students, resilience is fostered through strong, supportive relationships and a sense of self-efficacy. The presence of at least one stable, caring adult – whether a teacher, parent, or mentor – can significantly impact a child's ability to overcome trauma and challenges (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015).

In schools, resilience can be promoted by providing consistent routines, emotional support, and opportunities for students to develop coping strategies. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a key tool in this process, helping students learn to manage stress, regulate emotions, and build positive relationships. Activities such as art, music, and reflective discussions also play an important role in helping students process and express difficult emotions.

Importantly, fostering resilience also means creating an environment where students feel safe, valued, and connected—critical factors for overcoming trauma and reaching their full potential. By cultivating these protective factors, schools not only support students in their academic journey but also empower them to navigate life's challenges with confidence and hope for the future.

The potential role of a teacher

It's important to keep in mind that a teacher is not a psychotherapist. It's not the role of a teacher to 'cure' trauma or PTSD, or even to diagnose it. Nonetheless we believe that acting as a teacher it's possible to have an important positive influence on the mental health and resilience of the pupils.

A crucial part of a trauma-informed pedagogy lies in your – the teacher's – attitude towards your students (and yourself), and how you create nurturing relationships. Supporting students who have experienced trauma due to war requires a compassionate, trauma-informed approach that prioritizes safety, stability, and emotional support. The most effective strategies involve creating a stable and predictable environment where students feel secure and valued. By establishing clear routines and expectations, teachers can help and support students regain a sense of control and thereby ease anxiety.

One of the most important aspects of trauma-informed pedagogy, besides creating a safe, consistent and predictable environment, is not leaving children alone to manage their fear and life circumstances. As a teacher, you can primarily offer support by receiving their stories and listening to them.

Readiness to Talk About Difficult Topics

Creating space for open, non-judgmental conversations is key when difficult topics arise. Students often carry thoughts, reflections, and fears that need room to be expressed. As a teacher, you play a vital role in fostering a safe and respectful classroom environment—one where sensitive issues can be discussed without conflict or fear of judgement.

A core professional skill many teachers already possess is the ability to truly listen. This skill is essential—not only for supporting students' emotional well-being but also for helping them learn about themselves and others in a deeper, more lasting way. In fact, the ability to listen can be seen as a knowledge area in its own right—both for students to develop, and for teachers to continually strengthen. Sometimes, it can be helpful to gently prepare students by letting them know that a difficult topic will be discussed. Showing genuine interest in their stories and experiences can build trust and encourage meaningful dialogue.

Opening Up for Stories and Worries

In open discussions, it is crucial to help the group/class understand that it is important for every student to be able to describe and reflect. The structure of the conversation is up to you as a teacher to create conditions for, and it is essential to also listen to yourself as a teacher – what kind of conversations do I feel safe to administer/facilitate? Questions about how I, as a teacher, can manage situations, such as how to handle offensive comments during conversations, are important. And it is also needed for teachers to have the possibility to reflect together with other teachers and if possible psychologists who can support the teachers.

Approaching Challenging Topics

If you do not have access to reflection opportunities with other teachers and/or a psychologist, there are still some tips. For example, one way to approach challenging questions is to ask students to talk about themselves, not about others, and to describe their feelings. Literature, art, or crafts that address difficult/traumatic topics in different ways can offer some distance, thereby supporting students' own ability to tell their stories. Creating space for a process that begins with the difficult but also offers a forward-looking perspective and hope for the future can contribute to a more supportive environment for students.

Teachers can also support by being mindful of signs of trauma, such as withdrawal, difficulty focusing, or disruptive behaviour, and respond with empathy and patience. Encouraging mindfulness practices, like breathing exercises, offers students tools to manage stress and regain calm.

Networks to support both yourself and your students are also important. Establishing collaboration with counsellors, social workers, and families ensures a holistic approach to support. Then adding trauma-sensitive teaching methods, such as scaffolding learning and focusing on strengths, are also effective in helping students regain confidence in their academic abilities. Above all, the key aspect is to continue to move with patience and understanding, recognizing that healing is a gradual process.

Good to know

If you would like to learn more about different aspects of trauma, see the chapter End Notes, section Good to know about trauma.

Useful competences

There are skills and competences you can acquire, if you feel motivated to be and do more for your potentially-traumatised students. In particular,

- To practise self-awareness
- To create a 'safe' psychological environment
- To support pupils' trustful interactions with peers and others
- To use arts and physical movement for emotional regulation
- To empower students, individually and collectively
- To enable development of coping strategies and mechanisms

Activities that promote the development of these competences are included in the chapter Case studies yield challenges - and tools.

Regarding use of the arts, a special case is that of pictograms. Challenging experiences can impact speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN), and have a ripple effect on behaviour, mental health and learning abilities in general. Judicious use of pictograms and other art-based communications can ease understanding and reduce anxiety.

Helpful types of activity

You may already feel comfortable in the role of a 'trauma-informed pedagogue' as described above. Or perhaps you need to experiment, to feel your way into an approach that is appropriate for you and your pupils. The sections below offer some food for thought, and possibly for experimentation, based on a model for dealing with traumatic situations.

The chapter 'Case studies yield challenges - and tools' offers more specific experiences and approaches suggested by the authors of the case studies, or by the project team.

Change the narrative: reframing

Storytelling is an activity, mentioned in several case studies, that can spark changes, even deep changes, in how each person's experience is framed. We humans are storytellers. We continuously ask and answer – generally unconsciously – questions of identity. Identity builds upon beliefs about things like race/culture/history, gender, abilities/disabilities, ethics/values, social and economic status.

Each of us also has a basic attitude that is generally optimistic or pessimistic; and a mindset that is either fixed or growth-oriented: beliefs about our fate in life. These, as well as other aspects of identity, can be shifted or shaken by events, or turning points: a crisis, a traumatic experience, a sudden insight or 'revelation'.

Seek support

Seek support from friends, family, or others.
The teacher can promote integration and create opportunities to experience positive interaction in pairs or small groups, using activities such as teaching and practising non-judgmental communication, and inviting expression of values concerning school environment and relationships.

The teacher is also often the one who notices a particular need for support and is able to direct it to the right people - could be a specialist teacher for professional support, school principal, class parents, any institution that offers support. The teacher can also guide migrant parents regarding school rules and demands, as well as available support; this can help the parents to be more responsive and calm about the new situation.

Move on from self-blame

After a traumatic experience, it's easy to fall into blame and shame: was it all or partly 'my fault'?
The teacher can make space for discussions about responsibility, and about the negative effects of shame and blame.

Develop coping strategies

The teacher can encourage development of a growth mindset as Dweck (Farnam Street, 2025) suggests, for example through games or exercises that chal-

lenge assumptions and stereotypes. This benefits all students, migrant or not, experiencing trauma or not, and supports both kinds of coping strategies.

1. A coping strategy for getting through and learning from the traumatic event.
The teacher can use activities like 'Parallel worlds' to explore different coping strategies; and can use emojis and pictograms to help communicate feelings.

2. Being prepared and able to respond to upsetting events as they occur, despite feeling afraid.
The teacher can open for discussions about courage, and how fear and courage go hand in hand; and distinguish between being afraid (normal and indeed necessary for survival) and acting from fear.

Pacing

Enabling pupils to travel at their own speed, to take the time they need to gain resilience. This reduces the risk of ending up in a stereotype.

SUPPORT THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Reflections on an experiment

Within each stage of the combined Ukrainian projects (MENW plus STSEM), an average of four online psychological support meetings were held for each cohort of teachers. A total of 57 teachers took part, in 4 cohorts. The objective was to train teachers in stress management techniques, to increase their psychological resilience, and to provide techniques for self-support and peer-to-peer support. Practical methods and reflection were practised in each session. Teachers were also given some simple exercises to de-stress their students.
The program came to focus on eight approaches to strategies for coping with three main types of problem, namely:
Stress. Types of stress and coping strategies
Burnout. External and internal sources of strength in difficult times
Grief. Coping with material and intangible (non-material) losses
On the second point, regarding 'burnout', we examined and analysed recommendations for teachers, and introduced them during sessions when it was possible.

In evaluating the project, teachers specifically mentioned the value of psychological support sessions. It was important for them to share feelings and emotions, and many began to use the stress management and resilience-building techniques we had discussed in the sessions. Some also noted that they had taken additional classes and read additional literature on the topic after our sessions.

Conclusions concerning strategies

1. Self-awareness and self-reflection

Regular reflection on your own emotional state: Teachers need to monitor their stress levels, moods, and emotional reactions in order to detect signs of overload or burnout in a timely manner. Keeping a personal diary or talking to colleagues can help in this process.

Self-observation outside of work: It is important to be aware of how work affects your personal life and to establish a distinction between professional and personal roles.

2. Maintaining healthy boundaries.

Setting boundaries with students: It's important to maintain a healthy distance by not letting your students' emotions affect your life outside of work. This means understanding where the teacher's responsibility ends and the personal responsibility of the student and their family begins.

Clear schedules and adherence to working hours: Avoiding overworking yourself by being overly involved in work after hours, especially outside of school hours.

3. Emotional support and communication

Support among colleagues: Forming supportive relationships with colleagues to discuss emotional challenges and stressors. This can be regular team communication, discussing problematic situations, or creating "support groups."

Professional support: Seeing a psychologist or psychotherapist if necessary to work through your emotions and reduce stress. In the constant stressful circumstances, professional external help is sometimes one of the necessary pillars of support.

4. Physical and emotional self-support

Regular physical activity: Exercise helps to reduce stress levels, improve well-being, and maintain emotional balance.
Relaxation techniques: Adopting mindfulness practices, such as meditation, deep breathing, or yoga to relieve emotional stress.
Self-care: Paying attention to sleep, nutrition and rest, which are key aspects of maintaining overall wellbeing.

5. Training and professional development.

Regular training in stress management strategies: Participation in stress, burnout, and vicarious trauma management trainings for teachers. These programs help teachers acquire the skills to respond effectively to stressful situations.

Professional development in trauma-informed practices: Understanding the mechanisms of trauma and its impact on students can help reduce their own stress levels, as teachers will know how to respond more effectively to student behaviour.

6. Working with a professional supervisor

Supervision: Regular consultations with a professional supervisor can help teachers analyze difficult situations, deal with emotional stress, and receive professional support in difficult cases.

7. Planning time for rest

Balanced planning of working hours: The ability to manage your schedule to avoid overwork. Teachers can schedule time for breaks and rest throughout the day.
Vacations and rest days: It is important to plan regular rest to be able to recharge your batteries.

8. Managing expectations

Realistic expectations of themselves: It is important for teachers to realize that they cannot solve all students' problems, and this should not be a source of stress. It is important to focus on achievable goals and realistic expectations.
Understanding their limitations: Teachers should be prepared to recognize that sometimes helping students is beyond their professional capacity and requires the involvement of other professionals.

CASE STUDIES YIELD CHALLENGES - AND TOOLS

Many teachers from the partner countries have detailed their experiences and what they have learnt from working with migrant pupils about integrating and managing culturally diverse classes with respect for everyone. Some recurring themes were

- Creating safe spaces
- Identifying and challenging stereotypes
- Acquiring new language and communication competence

In the summary below we include lists of the tools or methods they mentioned, as well as a few additional tools from our own collection.

Creating safe spaces in the classroom/school context

A review of the case studies indicates that teachers work very hard to create safe spaces for their students, often with the help of colleagues and not least school psychologists or school health teams. Creating a safe space is also often connected with creating a space for openness and inclusion.

The work to create safe environments for everyone has in most cases involved both the newly arrived students and the students already attending the school, and thus benefits all students.

The classroom

At a physical level case studies show the crucial nature of the teacher's ability to create an adaptable and supportive learning environment in the classroom. Skillfully organising the classroom fosters both comfort and opportunities for connection. This may entail for instance rotating students between small groups and between seating arrangements. When a primary need is to build trust, it may make sense to keep students in stable arrangements for longer periods, while rotating more frequently can be used to encourage a wider range of interactions.

Simple ways to engage students

It could be said that all the activities described in the case studies contribute to creating a trustful atmosphere and expanding safe spaces. Here, we consider some activities that can be used to activate the students – both migrants and hosts –- to expand their own and others' safe spaces.

- Write a welcoming letter to newcomers
- Introduce a 'buddy system' with a host student undertaking to guide a newcomer
- Invite (all) students to present their country, or another country

Welcoming letters, presentations, and school outings

were activities described in the case studies as supporting early integration processes and contributing to create a strong foundation for inclusivity. The approaches varied: teachers design and adapt this type of activity for their local needs.

The welcoming letters – sent even before migrant students arrived – set a positive tone and created an openness towards the new students. Approaches vary: letters can be written by the teacher or by students, and addressed individually or to a group.

A 'buddy system' can help a newcomer to overcome feelings of loneliness and confusion in their new situation. This means pairing the newcomer with a peer to serve as a guide - showing important places, introducing people and explaining the rules in school, or just spending some time together during the breaks. Careful introduction and support is needed to make sure that the guide has a manageable task and is still able to take part in peer activities of their own.

Presentations about countries, exploring customs, traditions, and culture, encouraged understanding of both the host nation and migrant backgrounds, and contributed to building a sense of belonging to a global culture.

Outings, combined with cooperative games, strengthen bonds between students. These actions not only promote cultural diversity but also challenge preconceived notions, helping both students and teachers to see migrant peers as part of the community.

Making space for emotions and for choice

In exploring emotions with students, teachers used diverse methods to help children understand and express their feelings.

One approach involved ***journaling***, where students filled out an "emotion calendar" over two months, identifying emotions like fear, sadness, and joy. This practice created space for discussing emotions and fostering empathy among students.

Another activity invited local students to explore how they themselves felt at the start of the war, encouraging them to consider obstacles and feelings refugees might experience. Additionally, teachers used frameworks like Robert Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions and the Iceberg model to help students understand the connection between emotions and underlying values. According to the teacher these activities aimed to "develop emotional intelligence and promote empathy by showing students that, despite differing views, people share common emotions and needs". For migrant students, specific interventions were employed to address the unique emotional challenges they face, with psychological support available for those struggling to cope with difficult feelings.

Learning to live and learn together

Establishing safe spaces enables a group or class to move towards inclusion and integration, surmounting and then embracing differences. In an ideal world, migrant students would not only be 'tolerated', not only 'integrated' into the host culture, but would be regarded by teacher and host pupils alike as a valued resource for individual and group development; just as the migrant students would come to view their new situation as a valuable experience rather than a disruption of 'real' life.

Taking steps towards that ideal means - as many teachers point out - that we need to identify and confront our own preconceived ideas or assumptions.

We all have them: assumptions about 'other people'. Engaging pupils in examining their own assumptions is a powerful approach. And, this alone may not be enough: involving families is doubly important when migrant students are introduced into a class. This applies to the families not only of the migrant students but also of the local students.

The importance of culture and making new connections

The integration of new students is a long-term process that preferably engages the entire school community, including the families of students, in sharing their cultural heritage. It can also be interesting and enriching for all those involved, enabling new relationships founded on mutual understanding.

By integrating activities that celebrate diversity, educators can create a space for students to explore and share their unique cultural backgrounds. For instance, teachers in the case studies worked with engaging their students in creative competitions that highlighted different nationalities in order to foster dialogue and understanding. Also literary and artistic projects can inspire empathy and tolerance. Hosting discussions with community leaders or international guests can reinforce solidarity and promote cross-cultural respect.

These events serve as a powerful reminder that multiculturalism enriches the learning environment and helps build a more harmonious society.

- A multicultural calendar
- Art and handicrafts
- Food and recipes

A multicultural calendar

For celebrating diversity several teachers used a multicultural calendar. In Sweden at least, it also comes with suggestions for activities to support multiculturalism in schools and thus challenging stereotypes. Such a calendar may include

- Holidays and important days in the cultures of origin of all students; for example various dates of celebrating Christmas, religious events such as Ramadan celebrated by other students, the Independence Day of Ukraine and other national days.
- Days dedicated by the United Nations to (for example) children's rights, language diversity,

or global peace, which offer a platform to raise awareness about important issues, while encouraging students to value their differences and embrace inclusivity.

It is also possible to use well-known holidays, when for instance art and singing can serve as powerful tools for integration by combining language learning and cultural exchange. Through activities like multi-language Christmas carol performances, students got an opportunity to collaborate across cultural lines, enhancing mutual understanding. This shared creative experience fosters unity and helps break down language barriers, promoting inclusivity and integration.

Art and handicrafts

While several teachers recommended using arts and crafts lessons to help integrate newcomers, the only activities specifically mentioned were a workshop for making dolls, and the book development described in *Food and recipes*.

Food and recipes

Food is a great unifier. Previously in Swedish schools it was not uncommon to host intercultural potluck meals, often with pupils dressed in traditional costumes. Bringing food into schools is now discouraged in Sweden, but ways can be found to safely share food while respecting the needs of any people with allergies.

Exchanging recipes can also be effective. One Swedish teacher gathered recipes from students and their families and published a prize-winning cookbook (Baldock et al., 2016): students brought well-loved recipes from their country or region, cooked them together in home economics, and collaborated on creating and publishing a cookbook. This process included translating recipes, taking photos, and designing the book for printing and distribution.

Changing narratives

Some of the activities described by teachers can help pupils not only to become aware of their own stereotypes but also to build a positive narrative.

Storytelling

Storytelling as a human activity is doubtless as old as speech, and many or most of the case studies include some element of storytelling; each teacher has her or his own way of incorporating it into their lessons.

There are approaches to storytelling that can be particularly useful in re-framing experience by changing the narrative. One, mentioned in conversation by Ukrainian teachers, is an activity based on *The Hero's Journey* (Campbell, 2008): students are taught and enabled to express their own or others' heroic journeys in the form of comics (Jorsäter et al. 2014).

- Heroic journeys in comics
- Desired futures
- Parallel worlds

There is also a whole range of methods and tools for creating *visions of desired futures*, from the simplest ("Imagine your own corner of paradise, and draw a picture of it") to role play for older students that can take several days at camp, or weekly class sessions for a whole school year (Brunner & Urenje, 2012).

Some guidelines for teaching futures are supplied by Encounter Edu , which fit well with the concept of 'localism in a global context'. They mention the question of focus or scope for futures discussions and exercises. In general: the younger the student, the more localised and specific the focus should be.

In cases where focusing on desired futures may be experienced as too provocative, it is also possible to conduct exercises to create 'parallel worlds', for example as used by a few Swedish teachers: not with migrant students but with teenage dropouts.

Journeys of discovery

- 'Together' workshops
- Organize a joint outing
- Journalling
- Gratitude journalling
- Encounters with youth with a different perspective

A Polish teacher conducting ***'Together' workshops*** in cooperation with a psychologist writes:
"It is very important that the process of getting to know each other and one's cultures is perceived as mutual. There is often a belief that only migrants – people often regarded as "them" – are obliged to get to know Polish culture, while Poles, since they are at home, do not have to be interested in the culture of foreigners. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The source of hostility is a situation in which both parties, not knowing or understanding each other's cultural and moral differences, live in the same area."

Gratitude journaling is a simple yet powerful practice that involves regularly writing down things you're thankful for. It entails setting aside a few minutes each day to reflect on positive experiences or moments of gratitude, noting them down. Whether it's simple joys or deeper experiences, this practice helps shift the mindset and fosters a greater sense of contentment. Teachers who used this tool confirmed studies documenting that over time, it can enhance resilience, improve relationships, and contribute to overall emotional wellbeing.

Engaging families

Many teachers' stories also include the importance of engaging with the migrant families, taking an interest in the situation of the whole family. Trust and confidence between families and schools are a clear success factor.

Parents of the migrant students often need help to understand the formal choices open to their children, as well as their personal needs and opportunities. They need to be able to trust the host school system to provide relevant education, and to alert teachers or specialists to any difficulties. Teachers describe not only conversations, but also that they helped contact social services to create safe living conditions for the whole family. It is debatable where the boundaries of a teacher's responsibility lie, but here the teachers have chosen to act outside the classroom.

The families of the host class may benefit from help to accept and support the intercultural experiences of their children. In particular, stereotypes of 'foreigners' held by family members are influential in the mindsets of students; conversely, families holding intercultural values can be highly supportive. Teachers are aware of the importance of getting the parents

involved; for instance, one teacher writes about the importance of "...work on establishing a dialogue with Polish and foreign-speaking parents, making parents of Polish children aware of the benefits of contact between Polish students and other cultures."

Beyond passive or active acceptance of interculturalism, 'host' families can make positive contributions to the work of welcoming migrant students.

- Formal support
- Engaging school authorities/principals, and external institutions that are prepared to respond to the needs signaled by the school
- Informal support for new arrivals
- Inviting the new students into host homes and activities.
- Providing temporary (threshold) financial support to students from the school or local government: for example, where such is not standard, free lunches in a school canteen, free school supplies etc.
- Collecting goods and money in support of new arrivals

One school reported having conducted a campaign with host families to collect clothes, household goods, and money to enable newly-arrived migrant students to participate fully in their new surroundings. This may not be practical or even permitted in all schools; but families could be made aware of similar, civil-society initiatives that they could support.

Language

The importance of **monitoring** the development of the new language is mentioned by teachers as both important and mandatory: most countries have monitoring tools that they are obliged to use. These tools also play an important role in indicating when new efforts to support the students need to be made.

The communication challenge is not so much about how to teach a new language, but how to **motivate** learning. And, in the meantime, how to **communicate** despite language difficulties.

Motivating and supporting language learning

Bilingual teacher assistants
Tapping into the students' personal interests
Break time!

Language support

Having bilingual assistants or teachers available, also during breaks, provides invaluable support, offering both academic and cultural guidance that helps students feel welcome and confident. By providing specialized language lessons and additional support, such as bilingual educational materials and peer assistance, they help bridge language gaps. This tailored support not only boosts students' language skills but also encourages active participation in class.

Integration can also benefit from engaging 'old' students who speak the same language, as they may guide newcomers in both language and culture. However, this strategy must be balanced carefully, as it risks isolating the new student and hindering broader social integration - see above, 'Buddy system'.

Tapping into the students' personal interests

Teachers can spark students' motivation by discovering their personal interests and incorporating them into the learning process. For example, one teacher tailored a French curriculum to an individual student's level, aiming to build both language skills and self-esteem. Another teacher identified a student's interest in dogs, using this connection to encourage the student to engage in Swedish. When students see their passions reflected in their learning, it not only boosts their motivation but also fosters a deeper connection to the language and content.

Break time!

Supporting newly arrived students in language learning requires creativity and fun! Teachers recognize that language acquisition doesn't just happen in the classroom – it should be integrated into all aspects of school life. One creative initiative was the "pictorial dictionary" in the school corridor, where Polish and Ukrainian words were paired with images and translations. This project, created by both students and teachers, made learning interactive and visible, helping students remember new vocabulary in a meaningful context.

Another successful initiative was the "Active Break" program, where Ukrainian students were integrated into recreational and sports activities. Initially shy, the students soon overcame language challenges by communicating through physical activity, fostering a sense of belonging. Participating in team games and extracurricular sports allowed them to bond with their Polish peers, reducing feelings of isolation. These activities not only improved language skills but also encouraged teamwork, cultural exchange, and integration, making learning the new language both fun and effective.

Aids to communication

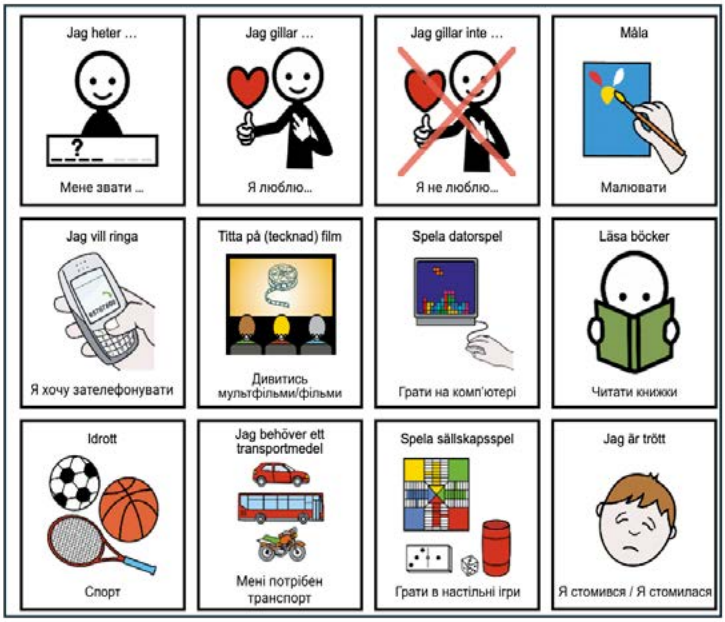
We usually don't pay much attention to it, but we are actually surrounded by symbols every day. They shape how we see the world. In Swedish schools, **pictograms** are routinely used. They can be a game-changer not only for migrant students but also for example for:

- Children with cognitive learning challenges
- Learners with ADHD who need help staying on track
- People on the autism spectrum who sometimes struggle with learning

Pictograms help by:

- Giving our brains a break (reducing load on short-term memory)
- Helping concentrate on what's important
- Encouraging pupils to share their thoughts and opinions
- Making sense of things when words are hard to understand

These little visual helpers can transform the classroom. They bring better communication, stronger understanding, and more inclusive space, especially for those students who've had a difficult journey to get there.



- Pictograms with basic 'school' words in both the European host language and Ukrainian are available by the European Commission (2022b): https://op.europa.eu/sv/publication-detail/-/publication/af0e9d8c-ac59-11ec-83e1-01aa75ed71a1
- In Poland the welcoming booklet: "For a good start. A welcome book for children and parents from Ukraine" is available and a useful tool.
- Social stories in different ways
- Talking Mats – a visual tool supporting communication and interaction

Most people today regularly use icons and emojis, not least in connection with check-ins. Several teachers in the project describe how they work with emotions in the form of pictures because it can be easier to express oneself using pictures.

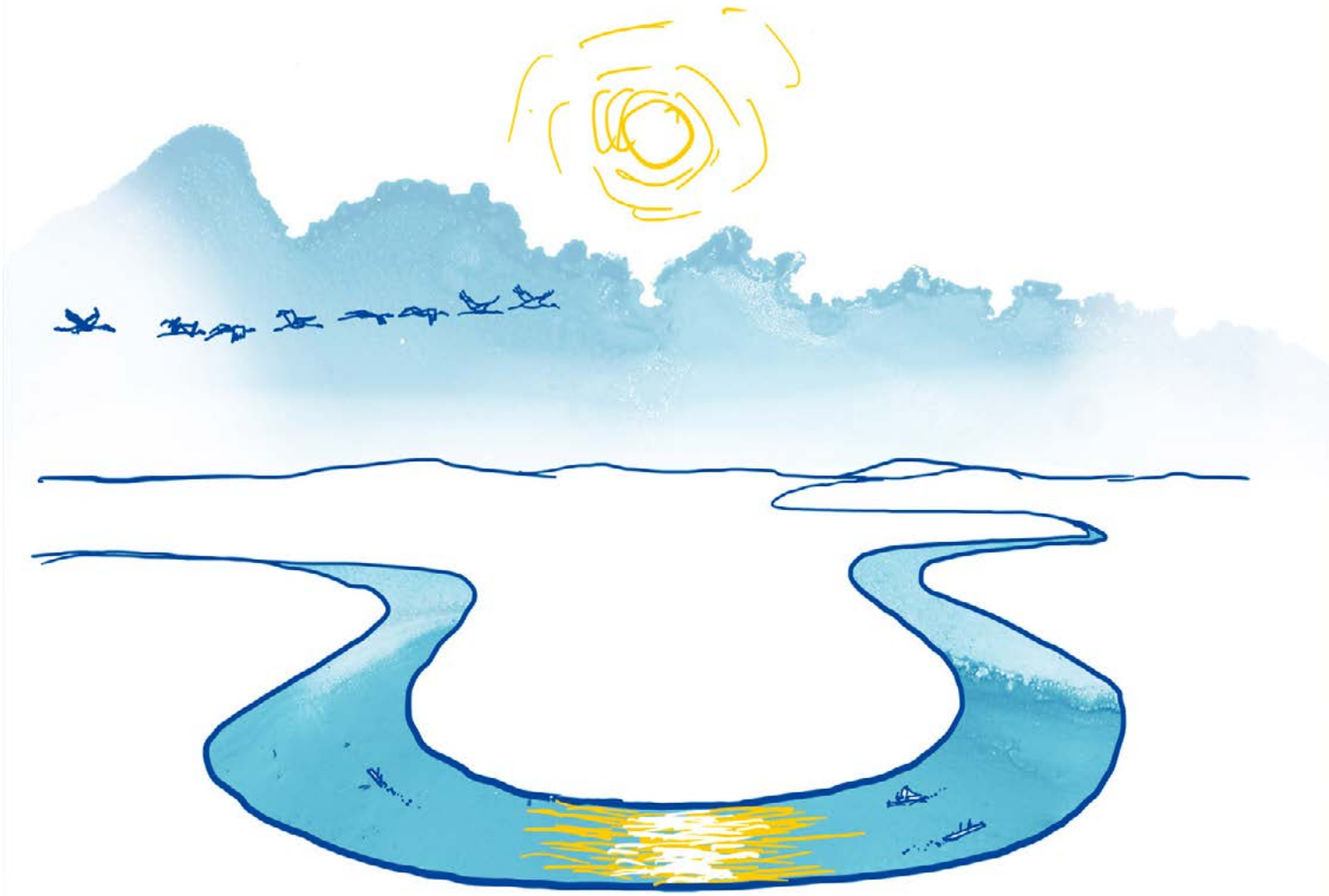
Especially when pupils are struggling, expressing fear in various ways or showing other expressions of trauma, the Save the Children Fund, among others, recommends that you as a teacher can draw together with the children. Such drawing can be free-hand or you can draw and tell a Social Story together. Social Story is a tool that is often used when working with children with autism, but can be a valuable tool in several situations. In the *Reading and links* section you can find links to more information and also a video on one way to create a social story together. It's in Swedish, but turn off the sound and you'll understand anyway. If there's something specific you want to talk about with your pupils, Talking Mats can also be a good tool.

An explanation of how to use social stories: https://therapyworks.com/blog/language-development/home-tips/using-social-stories-improve-childs-development/

How to create a social story together, in Swedish: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJE-hI4RvYw

Talking Mats. (n.d.). *Video on Talking Mats in practice*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJE-hI4RvYw

THIS RIVER CAN FLOW BOTH WAYS



Welcome back

There is a strong expectation by migrant Ukrainian pupils and their parents that they will return – if not to their original homes and schools, at least to Ukraine. Indeed, some such movement is taking place.
Many Polish schools already have experience of welcoming back pupils who have spent time in other countries – often, many years.

International migration

The growing number of Polish students returning from emigration and enrolling in Polish schools is becoming increasingly noticeable. According to official statistics, 438 Polish students returned from emigration in 2015, while a year later this number was almost doubled. In 2019 it peaked at close to 2000. Pandemic consequences and the ability to work online from any place in the world affected this trend even more.

These students, often referred to as "re-immigrants," bring with them diverse cultural and linguistic experiences gained abroad. While many of them adapt quickly to the Polish educational system, others face challenges such as language barriers or adjusting to different teaching methods. Schools are gradually implementing support programs to ease the transition, including additional Polish language classes and psychological support. This phenomenon highlights the dynamic nature of migration patterns and underscores the importance of creating an inclusive environment for students with varied backgrounds.

Internal migration

As the war continues, more and more Ukrainian children and their parents are forced to leave their homes in the east of the country and move to safer western regions. Although the move takes place formally within the same country, children often face different challenges: language problems (children from the Russian- speaking part of the country come to the Ukrainian-speaking part of the country), integration into a new community, loss of financial status and family housing, losing friends, and others.

One of the ways to solve this problem is regular work with children by specialists as part of extracurricular activities. Such efforts are particularly successful when they are integrated into existing projects or existing infrastructure for social support.
Activities offered vary widely, for example including soft skills like communication and critical thinking. The project used the method of Saturday Meetings: a series of weekly practical sessions with children. As a result, the children became more involved in the local community, found new friendships and became more integrated into school activities. The method is described in detail in the report Teaching with Empathy produced by the STSEM Ukraine project team.

WHAT WOULD HELP?

Augmented educational policy

From the case studies and international exchanges it became clear that decision- makers in the education sector, whether local or national, could do more to support teachers working with migrant students. We noted in particular four points, below.

Access to bilingual teachers or teacher assistants

Where such support was available, it was reported as being highly effective in promoting the wellbeing and cooperation not only of migrant students but also of their families.

Allocated time for teacher preparation

Advance information about new arrivals, and their circumstances, is in itself an important success factor; especially when time is allocated for the teachers to prepare for their arrival.

Invest in a Trauma-Informed Pedagogy, TIP

Migrant students have experienced life changes that can be overwhelming, potentially traumatic. Teachers who had the support of psychologists reported relief in coping with particularly distressed students; teachers who themselves received psychological support and training were further enabled to work proactively with their classes.

The STSEM experience shows that teachers can learn to support the emotional needs of their students, migrant or otherwise, in ways that benefit the whole class. The appropriate competence can be summarised under the heading of a Trauma Informed Pedagogy. See also *A different kind of teacher training*, below.

Clarity regarding responsibilities

Teachers reported experiencing stress when it was unclear how much responsibility they were expected to take in regard to the migrant students. When, for example, a student shows clear symptoms of traumatisation, or when migrant families appear uninformed about how the school system functions: who is responsible for calling in the appropriate expertise, or otherwise dealing with the situation?

In many such cases the answer should probably be the school principal. Clarity can remove some of the stress.

A different kind of teacher training

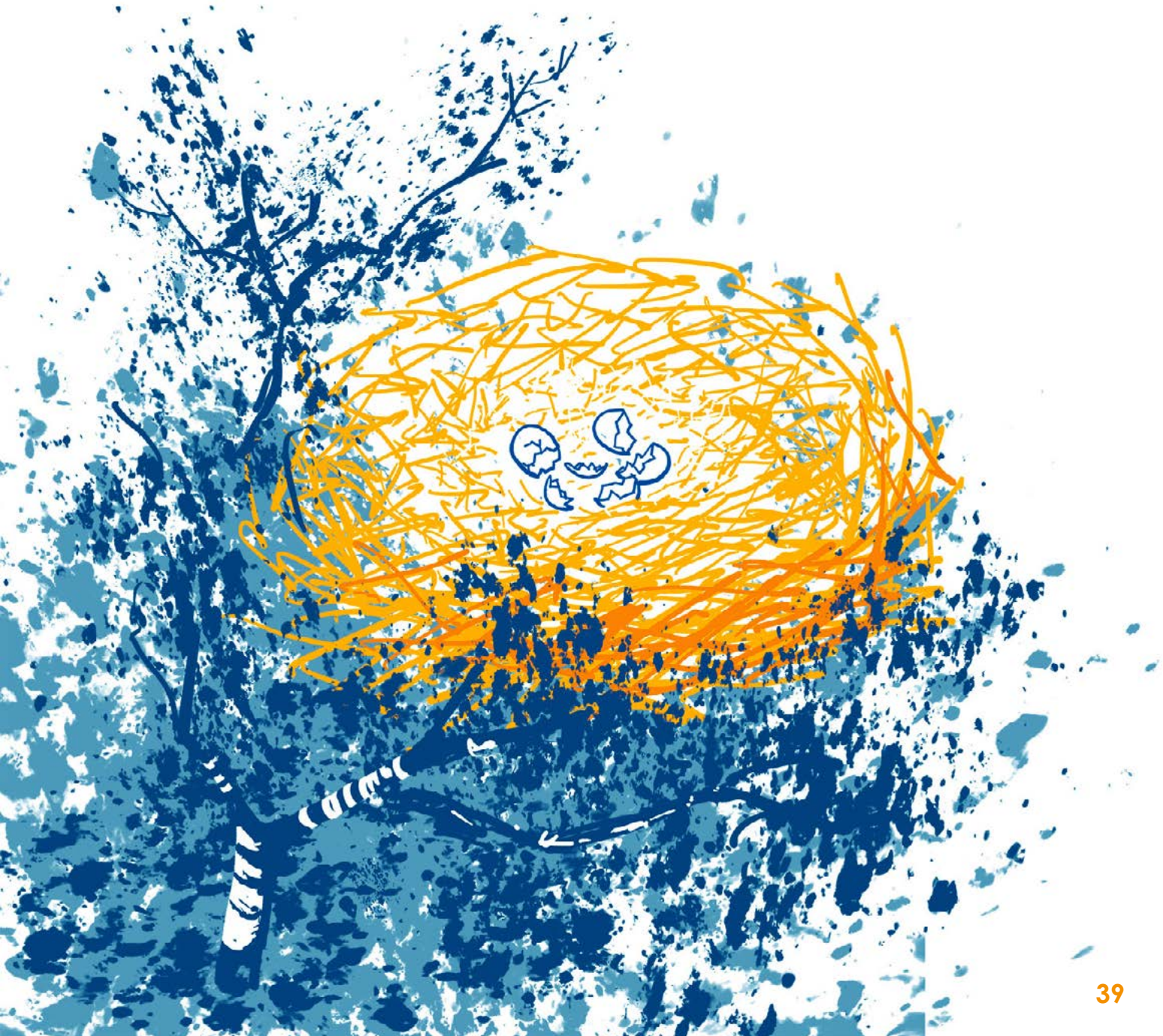
We envisage an opportunity for in-service teacher training based on the following outline:

TITLE pedagogy:

Trauma-Informed, Transformative Learning in Education

Introduction to Trauma-Informed Pedagogy, TIP
What does TIP require of the teacher?
Introduction to Transformative Learning and Edge Emotions
Methods of self-regulation and self-support
Emotions in the classroom
Supporting students' wellbeing
TITLE in practice: methods and examples, working with migrant students
Age-appropriate TITLE (K-6, 7-12, HE)

END NOTES



Background reading about trauma

- Types of trauma and their impact, including symptoms of distress (MedicalNewsToday, 2025)
- Recovery paths from trauma-induced distress (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2014)
- Cultural, historical and gender issues influencing trauma responses
- Emotional regulation (Klynn, 2024)
- The role of 'edge emotions' in learning (Mälkki, 2019)

Trauma-informed education and pedagogy

Trauma-Informed Education, TIE, is a relatively new and rapidly evolving field with aims to create safe, supportive learning environments for students who have experienced trauma. Exposure to traumatic events – such as displacement, abuse, or neglect – can have a profound impact on a child's brain development, emotional regulation, and overall wellbeing. These experiences can lead to challenges in academic performance, behaviour, and mental health (Maynard et al., 2019). TIE recognizes these impacts and uses a holistic approach to support students in their recovery and growth.

TIE could be looked upon as a new framework where a whole-school approach is one of the main aspects and therefore key components of TIE include professional development for all staff, organizational changes to create safe spaces, and trauma-sensitive practices to build trust and promote resilience. Training all educators and school staff to recognize the signs of trauma and implement trauma-informed strategies is highlighted as a key to prevent and de-escalate challenging behaviours, improve the classroom environment, and reduce risk for re-traumatization (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014). Safety, transparency, and empowerment are prioritized fostering a culture where students feel heard and valued. The incorporation of social and emotional learning (SEL) is essential, as it helps students build emotional regulation, empathy, and coping skills – tools that are vital for navigating past trauma and future challenges (UNESCO, 2019).

Research also emphasizes the importance of creating a sense of belonging within the school community, which contributes to better emotional health and academic outcomes (Quarmby et al., 2021; Allen et al., 2022). When such trauma-sensitive practices are integrated into the whole school system, educators

can help students not only heal but thrive, turning education into a vehicle for recovery and resilience as well as enhancing learning.

Teachers may of course encounter students who need trauma support when no whole-school approach is available.This guide therefore focuses on a trauma-informed pedagogy that can be of direct use. All recommendations should be viewed only as preliminary, worthy of further investigation and testing.

A series of Ukrainian projects

Several of the people engaged in the STSEM project, in Sweden and in Ukraine, were also part of the two preceding projects.

ESDA: Education for Sustainable Development in Action

ESDA grew from an even earlier pilot project (Ecodemia) whereby groups of teachers in Ukraine and Belarus tested ideas about ESD and produced a guidebook for teachers. In Ukraine this seed work flowered into six more years of development and delivery: course materials for all K12 grades, teacher training for more than 5,000 teachers, and work in 14 of Ukraine's 24 oblasts (regions) engaging over 300,000 pupils. In short: probably (still) the world's most effective ESD national program.

Even more remarkable than the sheer numbers is the quality. Working within a school system still functioning largely according to Soviet educational principles, the teachers embraced transformative learning and project-based methods. The effects were clearly shown by an evaluation conducted by PhD students from the national Ukrainian Academy of Pedagogical Science. For instance, both teachers and parents reported that the children became more adept at communication and cooperative problem-solving.

ESDA was funded, in two stages, by the Swedish International Development Agency, SIDA; which also commissioned an independent evaluation, with highly positive results.

UKRAINE. LESSONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THEY

PARTNERSHIP PROJECT UKRAINE–SWEDEN, 2010–2015

ELECTION INTEGRATIVE SUBJECT "LESSONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT" APPROVED FOR USE GRADES 1-9

> 5 000 teachers trained

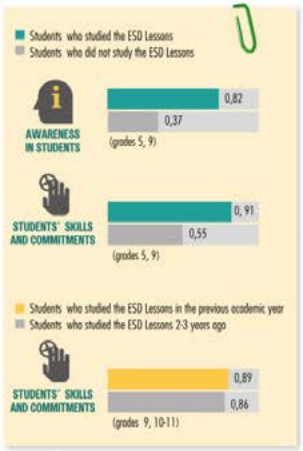
> 200 000 pupils enrolled

> 1500 schools

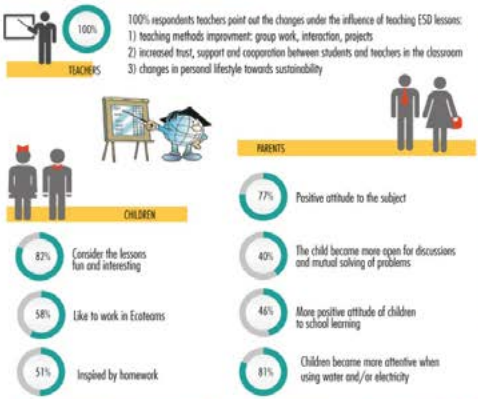
100 000 OF TEXTBOOKS WERE PRINTED AND GIVEN TO SCHOOLS

RESEARCH INTO EFFECTS

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS: 1,000+ STUDENTS, TEACHERS, SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, PARENTS FROM 6 REGIONS



ELECTION INTEGRATIVE SUBJECT "LESSONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT" APPROVED FOR USE GRADES 1-9



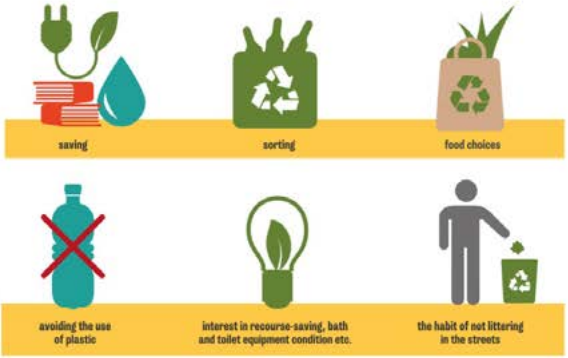
72% change family lifestyle and always apply the patterns of daily behavior focused on sustainable development

MODEL OF WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH IMPLEMENTATION IN ESD

Behavior changes off all members of the educational process focused on sustainable development

ALMOST ALL PUPILS & PARENTS REPORT NEW HABITS IN FAMILY

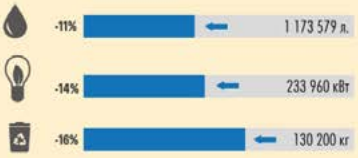
THE PARENTS MENTION IN THEIR QUESTIONNAIRES THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC CHANGES IN CHILDREN BEHAVIOR:



IN ADDITION, THE PARENTS NOTICED THE CHANGES IN SOCIAL HABITS OF STUDENTS, IN PARTICULAR, THEY NOTED THAT CHILDREN:

became less conflict
behave better with friends
became more responsible
became more diligent in studying
and also

WEEKLY RESOURCE SAVING IN FAMILY



MENW: Make Education, Not War

It was natural for those previously engaged in ESDA to ask themselves, upon the 2022 invasion of Ukraine: how can Ukrainian teachers best be supported to cope with the abrupt changes in their working lives? One teacher in Kharkiv reported that her school, with nearly 500 enrolled pupils, had fewer than 50 still attending in person. The others had fled, some further west, others abroad.

So we joined forces with Global Action Plan International, who set up a crowd-funding site and promptly raised enough money to support a first cohort of teachers, and later for a second cohort.

What has emerged since then, based initially on the needs of teachers whose pupils were widely dispersed:

- A 'Saturday Teams' concept for bringing together Ukrainian pupils online, to discuss their experiences in the diaspora and offer them support and snippets of educational material from the Ukrainian curriculum.
- A weekly online forum for the engaged teachers with two topics of focus on alternating weeks: pedagogical support one week, psychological support the next.

STSEM: Support for teachers of students with experience of migration

Building upon MENW, the STSEM support system within Ukraine has been

- Documented in a separate STSEM manual covering extracurricular activities, *Teaching With Empathy* (as exemplified by Saturday Teams, now adapted for face-to-face application).
- Summarised in pedagogical support notes, above.
- Modified to prioritise the needs of teachers in western Ukraine who have many domestic migrant pupils in their classes.
- Complemented with preliminary material concerning returning pupils.

Reading and links

Allen, K. A., Gray, D. L., Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (2022). The need to belong: A deep dive into the origins, implications, and future of a foundational construct. Educational Psychology Review, 34(2), 1133–1156. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-021-09616-5

Berkowitz, S., Bryant, R., Brymer, M., Hamblen, J., Jacobs, A., Layne, C., Macy, R., Osofsky, H., Pynoos, R., Ruzek, J., Steinberg, A., Vernberg, E., & Watson, P. (2010). The National Center for PTSD & the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Skills for Psychological Recovery: Field Operations Guide. https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/special-resource/spr_complete_english.pdf

Biester, U., & Mehlmann, M. (2020). A Transformative Edge. [Book].

Brunner, W., & Urenje, S. (2012). The parts and the whole: A holistic approach to environmental and sustainability education. Swedish International Centre of Education for Sustainable Development. https://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:808778/FULLTEXT01.pdf

Calhoun, L. G., & Tedeschi, R. G. (Eds.). (2014). Handbook of posttraumatic growth: Research and practice. Routledge.

Campbell, J. (2008). The hero with a thousand faces (3rd ed.). Princeton University Press.

Encounter Edu. (n.d.). How to teach futures thinking. https://encounteredu.com/cpd/subject-updates/how-to-teach-futures-thinking

European Commission. (2022a). Supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education: Considerations, key principles and practices (SWD(2022) 185 final). https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/SWD-2022-185-inclusion-displaced-children-Ukraine-in-education.pdf

European Commission. (2022b). Pictograms with basic words in both the European host country and Ukrainian, for use in schools. https://op.europa.eu/sv/publication-detail/-/publication/af0e9d8c-ac59-11ec-83e1-01aa75ed71a1

European Commission. Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. (2024). The inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in EU education systems – 2023-2024. Publications Office of the European Union. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/881892

Farnam Street. (2025). Carol Dweck: A summary of the two mindsets. https://fs.blog/carol-dweck-mindset/

Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the oppressed. Continuum.

Global Education Monitoring Report. (2019). Education as healing: Addressing the trauma of displacement through social and emotional learning (Policy Paper 38/66). UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000367812

Jorsäter, E., Mehlmann, M. & Pshenitsena, L. (2014). Drawing for Life: comics for sustainable development. Global Action Plan.

Karimova, H. (December 24, 2017). The emotions wheel: What it is and how to use it. PositivePsychology.com. https://positivepsychology.com/emotion-wheel/

Klynn, B. (November 28, 2024). Emotional regulation: Skills, exercises, and strategies. BetterUp. https://www.betterup.com/blog/emotional-regulation-skills

Mälkki, K. (2019). Coming to grips with edge-emotions. In A. Eteläpelto, K. Collin, & S. Paloniemi (Eds.), European perspectives on transformation theory (pp. 87–102). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-19159-7_5

Maynard, B. R., Farina, A., Dell, N. A., & Kelly, M. S. (2019). Effects of trauma-informed approaches in schools: A systematic review. Campbell Systematic Reviews, 15(1–2). https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1018
Medical News Today. (February 12, 2025). What is trauma? What to know. https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/trauma

National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). (2023). Talking to children about war. https://www.nctsn.org/resources/talking-to-children-about-war

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2015). Supportive relationships and active skill-building strengthen the foundations of resilience: Working paper no. 13. Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/working-paper/supportive-relationships-and-active-skill-building-strengthen-the-foundations-of-resilience/

Quarmby, T., Sandford, R., Green, R., Hooper, O., & Avery, J. (2022). Developing evidence-informed principles for trauma-aware pedagogies in physical education. Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, 27(4), 440–454. https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2021.1891214

Region Uppsala. (2023). Prata med barn om svåra händelser [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJE-hI4RvYw

Rudder4Life. (2024). Self-awareness: The personal iceberg metaphor model. https://www.rudder4life.com/self-awareness-the-personal-iceberg-metaphor-model/

SAMHSA. (2014). SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach (HHS Publication No. SMA 14-4884). Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. https://ncsacw.acf.hhs.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf

Satir, V. (explained by Ian Bartes). (2024). The Iceberg Model. https://www.rudder4life.com/self-awareness-the-personal-iceberg-metaphor-model/

Servant-Miklos, G. (2024). Pedagogies of collapse: A hopeful education for the end of the world as we know it. Bloomsbury Publishing. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350400511

Simandan, D. (2011). Kinds of environments—a framework for reflecting on the possible contours of a better world. The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien, 55(3), 383-386.

STSEM Team Ukraine. (2024). Teaching with empathy. [Publication].
Talking Mats. (n.d.). Free resources and research. https://www.talkingmats.com/research/free-resources/

UNHCR. (2023, September). Education on hold: Addressing barriers to learning among refugee children and youth from Ukraine—challenges and recommendations. Retrieved from https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/103089

Material in German

NCTSN Mit Kindern über Krieg sprechen https://www.nctsn.org/resources/talking-to-children-about-war-ge

Material in Polish

STSEM team Ukraine, 2024, Teaching With Empathy (Teachers manual for conducting extracurricular training sessions)
NCTSN Rozmawiając z dziećmi o wojnie https://www.nctsn.org/resources/talking-to-children-about-war-po

Material in Swedish

Baldock, Josefin *et al,* 2016, *Sjumilakokboken*

Material in Ukrainian

STSEM team Ukraine, 2024, Teaching With Empathy
NCTSN Розмова з дітьми про війну
https://www.nctsn.org/resources/talking-to-children-about-war-uk

Authors and contributors

Editorial team

Anna Blaszczak
Galina Gupan
Marilyn Mehlmann

Desk research and additional authoring

Anna Blaszczak
Charlotte Karlsson
Olena Pometun
Annika Piirimets
Galina Sierova

Case studies

For Poland

Bożena Matyjaszczyk
Joanna Wróblewska
Monika Żyśko-Gołębiowska
Monika Król
Katarzyna Zdeb
Bernadetta Widurska
Alicja Samsonowicz
Magdalena Antczak
Marta Gaweł
Aneta Orzechowska
Diana Sadowska
Justyna Bojarska
Sylwia Wałdowska

For Sweden

Josefin Baldock
Lesya Lutsan
Natalia Samoshko

For Ukraine

Olga Stremska
Viktoriya Yurchenko
Nataliia Pashkovska

Graphics and layout

Boris Goldammer


transformation
hosts international
publications